



Leadership Forum- activity update

1 message

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To: "mickeyluker@jacksonnc.org" <mickeyluker@jacksonnc.org>

THE LEADERSHIP FORUM

“Improving Tomorrow...Today”

August 2018 update

To: Interested and engaged leaders

Dear Mickey,

This is a long report because a lot is happening. Please take the time to read it.

The **Leadership Forum** is a volunteer initiative of seasonal and year-round residents of the Cashiers plateau. From our beginning we have operated as a group of caring citizens wanting to retain the village character of the Cashiers area while working to create actions that solve deeply rooted problems. And, we know that the area is growing, and we want to influence how in a meaningful way.

Special News- Our volunteer efforts as individuals needs to have a corporate entity for legal protection so we are excited to announce that effective September 1st, the managers and board members of the *Village Conservancy* are now all engaged leaders of the Leadership Forum. The Village Conservancy is a 501c3 public charity and this entity was responsible for the creation of the Village Green park, the Cashiers Historical Society, McKinney Meadow (green space

recently deeded to the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust) and several other community initiatives. Now, through this public charity we are able to raise the needed funds as charitable donations to fulfill the actions for many of the initiatives below.


We need your help- We have tried to create a confidential database of area residents to be able to communicate only important information. There are 113 homeowner's associations that we have identified, and we have only reached about 20 and we want to communicate with the rest. If you are in one of the attached list or know someone in one, please email Paul Robshaw (paulrobshaw@me.com) if you think you can help and how. All we need is names and email addresses.

Leaders engaged

202 individuals have engaged in one or more of the taskforces and they have created actions which are summarized below. 37% of the volunteers are year-round residents. 299 more residents are supportive of our efforts to initiate actionable projects on the plateau.

If you know of others who would like to engage or stay informed, please forward their email address and cell phone number.

Initiatives status:

- **Education-** Dr. Joy Clark, leader. 35 participants
 - Acted by doing the following:
 - Jill Keith's 42 x 30 inch "flag/banner" was hung for a month at the Village Green and they are making a placard to be distributed and displayed in retail establishments throughout the community. It promotes the variety of education offerings in the area.
 - cid:image002.jpg@01D43FBC.583029E0Two of our task force members, Diane Tuttle and Jill went to Ingles and stood for 4 hours to help 150+ people to sign up for the "Tools for Schools" program. Under this program, Ingles agrees to donate a percentage of all registered participant purchases to the designated school. Actions like this is what gets things done by leaders like them. They had fun, saw many friends, made new ones and signed up a ton of new registrants, helping the schools. Thank you, ladies!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - The **public relations banner** designed by Alan Rhew hung for a couple weeks at the Crossroads!!!
 - Rick Robson, Ann Goldman, and Linda Zeagler are progressing on **Website work**. Hampton Preschool and Early Learning Center is in the process of designing a website. When it finishes, all four

schools will be connected to the education link at the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce.

- Dianne Tuttle is writing a brochure about the schools. It will be distributed to all realtors and commercial establishments.
- The Education task force is co-hosting a Leadership Forum funded dinner with Blue Ridge school high school students and parents about the options available while SCC financial aid expert will share information and support for college financial aid.
- **Junior Achievement** is a program that Mary Jo Mayfield and Matt Cole are investigating for Blue Ridge and Summit schools. Mary Jo has researched the Personal Finance program for 25-30 high school students with eight 45-minute sessions for \$130. They are going to contact the principals and determine whether the Interact Group at Blue Ridge should be the starting point or whether all students in one grade should be the target. Volunteers to teach the class are needed, and they are following up to identify them.
- Irv Welling reported that the **Cashiers Area Scholarship Alliance Work** has designed a generic scholarship application to be used by all of the area organizations as the basic application. He also explained that financial aid experts at WCU and SCC will be meeting with his group. Apparently, scholarship funds can reduce the amount of financial aid a student can receive from these schools, so there is an element of working at cross purposes.
- **School to Work - Connections** were discussed with each of the principals at Blue Ridge and Summit. A **combined 6/7/8th Career Convention** off the campus of either school has been tentatively planned for this upcoming winter with great enthusiasm from the principals who have offered to assist any way they can. The students would complete an “interest survey” and based on the results, professionals from these areas would make “break out session presentations”. We discussed the need for a vibrant, young Key Note Speaker and a “What to do and what not to do” interview skit perhaps created by the WCU theater department. Paul Robshaw identified Townsend Stewart to be the “keynoter” and he has agreed to do it.
- Mutual support for the **Boys and Girls Clubs in Cashiers** was also discussed. They provide after-school programs for 1/3 of the students at both Blue Ridge and Summit including tutoring and academic support. This program is under consideration for another avenue for our work.
- **Financial Support** for the Education Initiative work is needed. Paul Robshaw explained that the Leadership Forum will be able to raise charitable funds soon as we reorganize the Village Conservancy public charity.

- **Health/Wellness-** Dr. Walter Clark, leader, 58 participants (40 are physicians)

- The group reviewed the status of the sale of the non-profit, Mission Health, to the public for-profit company, HCA. Some expressed concern because of the loss the Highland Cashiers Hospital generates annually. We

think it will be status quo for a few years. The proceeds from the sale, expected to be \$1.5 billion will be held from a new foundation called the Dogwood Health Trust. It will focus its mission on health and wellness initiatives throughout Western North Carolina.

- Mission Health announced that it will give \$15 million of the proceeds from the sale to the Highlands Cashiers Hospital Foundation over a 3-year period. The foundation will have about \$30 million and will no longer have any relationship to the hospital and will be repurposed to establish and support health and wellness initiatives in the Cashiers and Highlands area.
- One concept being considered is to create a health park on Foundation property in Cashiers, 8.4 acres between 64 & 107 to be occupied by multiple specialties. If this is created it would be a terrific Cashiers asset and a support entity to help maintain the viability of the hospital.
 - Three questions were posed to the group and will be discussed at the next session:
 1. How valuable is it to retain a foundation corpus?
 2. What specific health care needs are needed in the communities?
 3. What health care services would donors in the area support?

- **Community Housing-** John Franklin, leader assisted by Linda Bengé & Turner Inscoe, 28 participants

- Many issues were discussed but the focus is to accomplish one thing this year. All agreed that it should be to create housing for teachers, nurses and full-time professionals.
 - Location- it was concluded to have it in the Glenville area, closer to Silva because of access to a younger population and lower cost shopping at Walmart, Lowes, etc.
 - Cost- it is estimated to cost \$150 psf plus the cost of land.
 - Financial support- The need exists to have a 501c3 public charity as the sponsor and we now have that with the recent control by the Leadership Forum of the Village Conservancy. This will enable donors to make a tax-deductible contribution in support of this initiative.
 - Grants- Brandy Letson found a WCU professor who volunteered to write grant requests for us.
 - Sewer- build it with septic
 - Type and Size- we focused on building 16 units, 8-1 bedroom and 8-2 bedroom duplexes in Glenville. Beth Townsend and Tom McAllister identified 2 sites with 14 acres each that could be bought right. These will be investigated.

- Property management- Brandy and her husband are willing to manage any rental units that are part of this project.

- Alliances:

- Habitat for Humanity- they have expressed an interest in working with us for rental or rehabilitation of properties. All agreed that partnering with Habitat would be good for our project and enhance our credibility. We will continue to pursue this connection.

- Issues to be resolved at the next meeting:

- Who will own the property that is purchased?
- Grant funds:
 - How is the grant to be written?
 - How long will it take?
 - How long to get the funds?
- Business plan- Who will write it? We need one to be able to raise money.

- **Workforce Development-** Jim Dunn leader, 18 participants

- Job placement- Community websites are a good way to source opportunities but maintaining them is difficult. They must be current daily or they get stale and unused. We decided that we need to create a “Facebook group” to house this. It is the easiest way for people to keep the information current. We need to identify a task force member to create this.
- Job skill building offerings-Blue Ridge school and Southwestern Community College do this and now that they are back in session we can access them.
- We are planning a meeting with the coordinators at Southwestern Community College about the New Century Scholars program and to find out how we can help them to expand the program.
- We are exploring public transportation options that might assist in connecting Cullowhee, Sylva, and Brevard residents to employment in this area. We are communicating with a couple of different transportation companies to see if regular bus lines might be feasible.
- Employment needs- Brian Greig did a wonderful job of contacting the area clubs to understand their employment needs and challenges. The clubs face the same challenges as the rest of the employers and

often get many of their workers through other out-of-area club relationships and international staff members who require additional expense and paperwork associated with acquiring work VISAs. It seems that if we can work as a group to address the challenges for all area employers, we will indirectly benefit the local clubs who face many of the same challenges.

- Brian also explored the possibility of partnering with educational institutions (i.e. Clemson, Southwestern Community College, Western Carolina University, The Culinary Institute, and others) to see if the clubs could be used in their shoulder seasons to offer educational clinics or certificate programs for some of our area's labor needs (i.e. landscaping, golf course maintenance, hospitality, food service, etc.). Beyond this, we feel that given the right learning centers and computer labs, we may be able to offer remote educational opportunities for technical fields such as office administration, medical assistance fields, computer sciences, and many others. The trick to this is having the right (and technologically advanced) learning center(s). This may come about through convincing SCC and/or WCU that they should have a larger presence in our community. Another possibility is to incorporate this type of facility into the new building being designed and located on the Community Center property. The primary intent of this new facility will be to expand the ability of the Boys & Girls Club to serve children up and through their middle school years, but there's no reason it couldn't do both with some intelligent planning.

- **Technology-** Craig Moore, leader, 16 participants

- We agreed to keep the resident survey open and now have 500 respondents
 - In general, we know that the community is dissatisfied with all internet and cell carriers, and they are indicating a willingness to invest in improving their internet access.
- We discussed creating a document that gave users all the rationale for having broadband. Here are some of the initial thoughts:

Needs	Fact	Benefit
Emergency medical	Virtual care, 911	Immediate help and results
Run a Business-Critical to obtain results	Immediate access	Efficient, effective
Communicate with friends and family	Instantaneous	Responsive, effective
Receive and send information	Immediate communication	Effective, responsive
Invest and monitor investments	Informed, rapid, able to respond	Better results
TV- Sports, News, Movies	Enjoyment, inform	Informed

Improve value of home
\$50-100,000

Broadband adds substantially

Increase in value of

- Reality- we found that no commercial company is willing to invest the capital to install the infrastructure in the communities. We agreed to assist communities that are willing to make the investment themselves and then put them together to bid providing internet service.

- **Community Plan-** Paul Robshaw, leader, 13 participants

- The task force met and debated the rebranding of the Village Conservancy once we are in control. The debate continues on September 10th.
- Now that the 501c3 is complete, the task force will create a method to fund the various initiatives
- A draft business plan will be discussed on 9/10
- The vision statement was finalized-
 - **“Improving Tomorrow...Today”**

- **Culture and entertainment-** Ann Self, leader, 17 participants

- Held a meeting on August 7th and only two people attended. Because Ann Self of the Village Green and Stephanie Edwards of the Chamber of Commerce cover this so well, it seems that our involvement is not needed. We will continue by supporting their efforts.

- **Natural Resources-** Ann Wroblewski, leader, 33 participants

- All want to get behind creating pathways and greenways throughout Cashiers. Ann and Ann Austin agreed to meet with county representatives to further this effort. They did so and were encouraged by the reception. The county manager agreed to dedicate staff to help create a plan for the Cashiers area.
- We agreed to launch an initiative to create a pathway from Summit Charter School to the Village Green. Since this will involve obtaining an easement over private property it became critical for the county to own the easement and eliminate any liability on the private owners. Paul Robshaw obtained agreement from Don Adams, the county manager, that they would take it and maintain it. They did not have available funds to pay owners for the easements. Now that we have the 501c3, we can raise the necessary funds.

- Ann and Ann spoke with County Planning Director Mike Poston for an update on his communication with Equinox—the Asheville Land planning firm—regarding routes and cost estimates for a greenway. Mike is going to help arrange for the committee to meet with the two NC Parks and Recreation Trust and the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

- All want to work to preserve precious “green space” in the village core and will develop plans in the next meeting

- We want to learn more about the Trust for Public Lands and how they could work with the task force on longer term projects. Cynthia Brown agreed to pursue this initiative.

- **Crime Prevention-** Jim Sacha, leader, 13 participants

- Since there are few things we can do, one is to inform the community on actions it can take. We debated all the things people need to do and came down to five. We will discuss how we go about this at our next meeting but here is the communication we will promote:

Safety Is In Your Hands

1. **“See something, Say something!!”** to your HOA or the proper authorities
2. Consider an alarm system, cameras or signs- perhaps all
3. Consider hiring a private security company
4. Have property physically checked when gone
5. Remove valuables when gone

- **Transportation and Infrastructure-** Jim Poche, leader, 36 participants

- We have identified four key focus areas:

1. Pedestrian Travel
2. Vehicular Travel
3. Utility Infrastructure
4. Downtown Center and Master Planning

The principal focus initially is to solve the issue of pedestrian safety. With Cashiers growing, we really need sidewalks and pathways. We have initially focused on building sidewalks on Frank Allen Road, Hwy 64, Hwy 107 and back to Frank Allen

- Discussion items:
 - Highway Right of Way and DOT- Essentially there are no legal rights of way. It has caused enormous confusion and a small taskforce is working to solve it. The DOT, county and locals are planning a meeting the week of 9/17 to try to get it resolved.
 - Once we resolve this, task force members will approach owners to get them to contribute all or some of the funds to build sidewalks on their property.
 - We already have surveyed the site and have preliminary engineering on where to place the sidewalks.
- Mike Benitez agreed to get with several of the task force members and approach the County Commissioners individually or in pairs to solicit funding and support for the endeavors of the Task Force and Leadership Forum objectives.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul Robshaw

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